





This is Hilda, a blue-haired adventurer with a gift for befriending dangerous creatures...

Her deer fox, Twig, who sticks by her side through rain, snow and the occasional blast of troll breath...

And her mum who knows the importance of tea and cucumber sandwiches after a day of adventuring.

The three of them have lived in the northern wilderness for all their lives...

Until the day a 3,000 year old giant stepped on their house. (For the full story, see pilot script)

Now, they have no choice but to leave the wilderness behind and move to the bustling city of Trolberg.

Living in the city, Hilda fears that her free-wheeling days of adventure are over, but she soon discovers that Trolberg and its surroundings are also home to all manner of beast, spirit and sprite...



HILDA AND FAMILY

HILDA

NATURAL HAIR COLOUR:

Blue

FAVOURITE FOOTWEAR:

Red boots

FAVOURITE WAY TO TRAVEL:

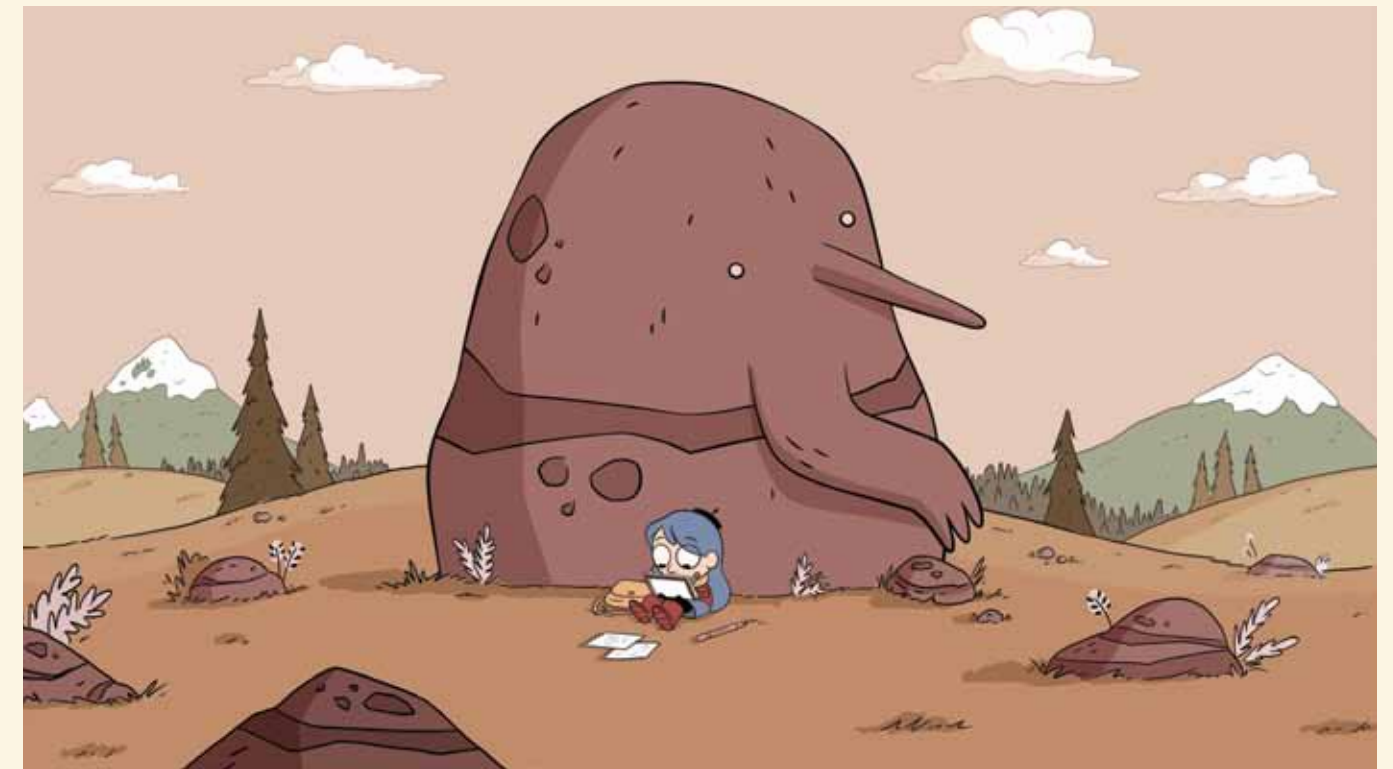
On the back of a flying woff (landings can be rough, though)

CURRENTLY READING:

Caves and their Unfriendly Occupants

TYPICAL QUOTE:

"We're lost and probably surrounded by all manner of weird creatures. Kind of cool, huh?"



Hilda's sketchbook is filled with her drawings of all kinds of creatures: trolls... giants... woffs... sea spirits... that weird Wood Man...

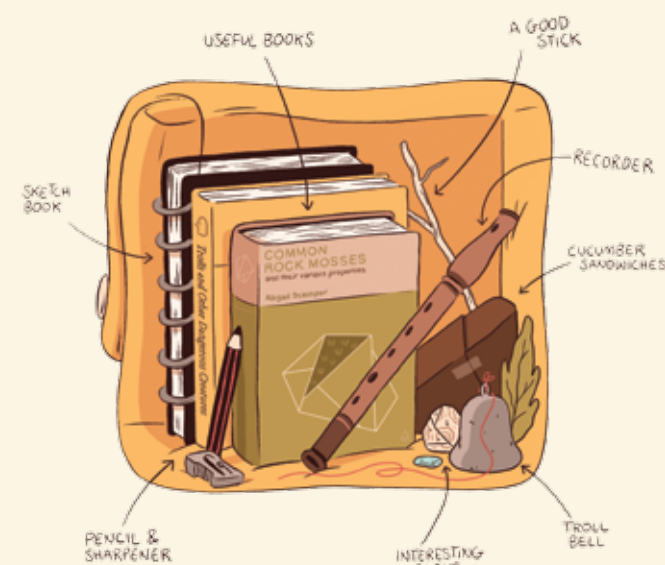
As revealed by her sketches and doodles, Hilda somehow finds a way to make friends with every bizarre creature she comes across, and she goes out of her way to come across them. Befriending wild and magical beings leads to some pretty traumatic moments, but truth be told, Hilda embraces traumatic moments. As she sums it up,

"Such is the life of an adventurer."



Hilda has grown up with the freedom to jump on the back of a woff and then take a midnight stroll with a giant, or simply wander the hillsides until she finds a rock that looks suspiciously like a troll. She's the kind of explorer who *likes* getting lost. How else can you discover what you didn't know you were looking for?

A look inside Hilda's satchel reveals her essential adventure gear:



In Hilda's world, all human beings accept magical creatures as part of the natural order of life, but that doesn't mean the average person understands how to get along with these creatures, or is even especially curious about them. In this regard, Hilda is not your average person, but it's not because she possesses super-powers. Instead, she makes the most of her human powers of curiosity and courage. She pays attention to things others are too busy to notice or would prefer to ignore. In fact, Hilda's willingness to take a closer look at the world is what opens the door to adventure for her.



When she moves from the northern wilderness to Trolberg, Hilda is relieved to discover that Trolberg is also full of magic and mystery. What's more, Hilda's connection to the wilderness remains strong, thanks to some unexpected connections between certain creatures who live in the remote wilderness and those who live in and around Trolberg: migrating woffs... renegade elves... sea spirits that get lost travelling up river and river spirits that venture too far down river...

Hilda's confidence to explore is rooted in the cosy home life she shares with her mum. It's always been just the two of them, and Hilda clearly gets some of her independent spirit from her mum. When Hilda bursts out of her front door in search of adventure, it's her mum who sends her off with her favourite cucumber sandwiches, and it's her mum who tucks her into bed at the end of a thrilling, but exhausting day. To be sure, the two of them can annoy and exasperate each other, but their close bond is never in question.

Whether she's snug in her bed or trekking through a dark forest, Hilda shares the ups and downs of an adventurous life with her deer fox, Twig.



TWIG

Twig is a deer fox, with wits as sharp as his antlers. Deer foxes are known to be quick, clever and courageous, even when up against adversaries much bigger and stronger than themselves. Deer foxes are so rare that they are almost considered mythological, and even Hilda doesn't know that much about them.

The virtue for which deer foxes are most famous is their fierce loyalty. Recent studies suggest that they "imprint" upon a kindred spirit at a young age, and declare themselves that individual's loyal friend and protector until the end of their days. Fairy tales and legends aside, it seems that in the wild deer foxes most often imprint themselves on powerful wood spirits or giants; only rarely will a deer fox find a kindred soul in a human, as Twig has found in Hilda.

It should also be noted that they are adorable – deer foxes are rated an impressive 9.4 on the Yuko/Hoffman cuteness scale. Twig, of course, is a 10+.



After all, what great hero of legend didn't have a faithful deer fox at her side?

HILDA'S MUM

BIGGEST CHALLENGE:
Answering all of Hilda's questions

Hilda's ability to engage with every creature she meets from the smallest bug to the tallest giant is a source of both pride and worry for her mum. She wants Hilda to have adventures, and at the same time, she doesn't want her to get hurt. She has moments when she is thrilled by Hilda's ability to ask lots of questions... and then moments when she'd really love it if her inquisitive daughter would simply do as she says - no questions asked!

Even when they disagree, Hilda's mum listens to her and never condescends. She is honest in admitting her mistakes and not afraid to apologise when she loses her patience now and then. Hilda's mum also enjoys her cozy times with Hilda, sharing a tea party or playing a tie-breaking round of Dragon Panic (their favourite board game). Their relationship is full of love, honesty and mutual respect as well as worry, exasperation and mutual annoyance - in other words, they share a fully realised mother-daughter bond.

Hilda's mum is a freelance architect who works at home. When she and Hilda lived alone in the wilderness, it was easier to manage both her job and her daughter. While she spent hours working, Hilda spent hours exploring outdoors. If Hilda wanted to spend the night in a tent in the rain by herself, that was fine! Soggy and cold, but perfectly safe. To Hilda's mum, however, the crowded streets of Trolberg seem potentially more dangerous than anything Hilda might come across in the remote wilderness. At the same time, she thinks that the move to Trolberg is good for both of them, and she wants Hilda to have the chance to go to a normal school and make some "proper friends", i.e. friends who are human.



HILDA'S FRIENDS

ALFUR

FAVOURITE WAY TO TRAVEL:
Hilda's ear



Originally from the northern wilderness, Alfur is an elf who has travelled to Trolberg with Hilda and currently lives on a shelf in her workstation.

In the wilderness, the size of the elf population is astounding with settlements stretching out as far as the eye can see. That is, if the eye can see

them: most people will remain completely oblivious to the bustling world at their feet. The reason is quite simple: elves are usually invisible, and take very seriously the business of who can see them and who can't. Before an elf becomes visible to a human, one can be confident that there will be a great deal of paperwork involved. Fortunately for Hilda, Alfur takes the liberty of filling out the paperwork for her, thereby opening her eyes to an amazing new world.

As Hilda can attest, to understand elves, one must first understand their paperwork, the chief physical manifestation of their traditional bureaucracy. Elves have special forms that must be requested, filled out, signed, submitted, counter-signed, approved, copied and filed for every situation imaginable.

Do you wish to travel by bicycle from one elf country to another? There's a form available for that.
Do you wish to seek an audience with the elf prime minister? There's a form available for that, too.
Are you interested in cutting your grass slightly shorter than the recommended length detailed in your local elf neighbourhood handbook of lawn and sidewalk maintenance standards? You'd better believe there's a form for that!

Nothing is more delightful to an elf than a neat stack of properly executed forms, and nothing more shameful than the twin specters of incomplete paperwork and clerical errors.

Though elves are seldom known to be outwardly hostile or aggressive towards humans, the rare occasions when the two species do interact tend to be quarrelsome. This is usually the result of land disputes, e.g. humans unwittingly settling in the midst of an elf town or city - albeit one that's invisible to them! When such frictions arise, elves have been known to defend their territory through acts of sabotage and vandalism. When Hilda and her mum became the object of elf hostility, Alfur befriended Hilda and helped her broker peace.

Alfur describes himself as "a writer, not a fighter". He is the first elf from the Northern Elven Counties who has been granted a passport to travel to Trolberg and file reports on what he discovers in the big city. Thanks to his friendship with Hilda, he has a place to stay and someone to share his adventures with.

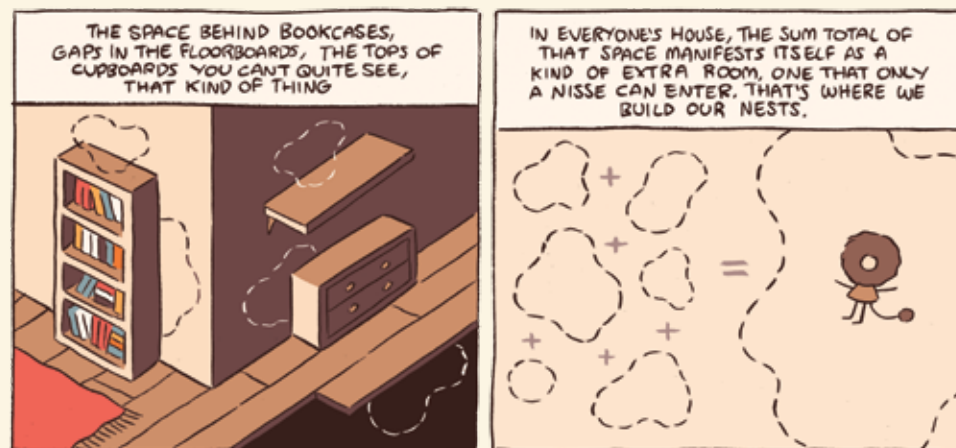


TONTU

CURRENT RESIDENCE:

The Nowhere Space in Hilda's house

Tontu is a nisse, or house spirit, who lives in Hilda's house. All nisses prefer to live in human houses, one nisse per house (exceptions are sometimes made for duplexes). Most households in Trolberg already have a nisse, which came as a surprise to Hilda. It's an unusual arrangement made possible by the nisse's ability to make use of unused spaces. As Tontu explains to Hilda:



For obvious reasons, these areas also tend to serve as receptacles for lost items, which then make their way into the nisse's nest. This perhaps has contributed to the nisses' reputation as "borrowers" or pests (a reputation most nisses would confirm, that is, if you're talking about some other guy), and has led to their banishment from many a home. In fact, Hilda rescued Tontu from the streets after he was unfairly banished from his original home.

Hilda discovers that it is difficult to obtain reliable information about nisses, since the nisses themselves will readily spread unflattering misinformation about their peers. Ask one nisse about another, and he'll likely describe a lying, thieving, ne'er-do-well who puts empty milk cartons back in the refrigerator and always leaves the toilet seat up. And woe to the nisse who tries to enter another nisse's nest! Nisses are very protective of their territory, and they do not share. Perhaps this rivalry stems from the nisses' constant competition for limited space in other people's homes.



Though they vary in appearances, all nisses in a given region answer to the same name: in Trolberg they go by the moniker "Tontu". In a situation where more specificity is required, a brief description can be appended, e.g. "Tontu-with-the-big-nose" or "Tontu-who-always-has-crumbs-in-his-beard".



Most people would never think of befriending a nisse. At best, they simply ignore them, and at worst, they banish them at will. Hilda, however, would never think of ignoring a magical being who lives under her roof, or, rather in the Nowhere Space under her couch cushion, behind her bookcase and under her floorboard. And Tontu proves that befriending your nisse has its benefits: he makes excellent hot chocolate, which he happily serves to Hilda and her mum from the bookcase or the couch cushion!



While Alfur and Tontu share Hilda's home on a regular basis, she does occasionally receive a visit from a friend who lives in the woods of the northern wilderness. He never calls ahead to say he's coming, he never asks if it's a convenient time to visit, and he never, ever knocks...

THE WOOD MAN

FAVOURITE BEVERAGE:

Twig tea with a dash of dirt

Enigmatic, cool and made entirely of wood, Hilda first met the Wood Man when she still lived in the wilderness. She finds it annoying that he always enters her house without knocking, but on the plus side, he never fails to bring a log of wood for the fire. He's not a demanding house guest; mostly, he just likes to lie down and read by the fire. He finds it relaxing to be in someone else's house because, as he puts it, "I'm aware of too much in my own house to ever be truly comfortable in it." The only thing that disturbs his peace when he visits Hilda's home is the less than musical sound of her playing the recorder.





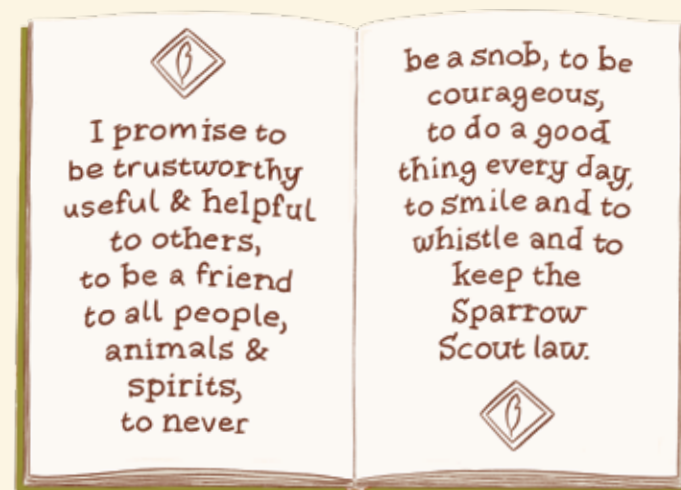
Once Hilda leaves the wilderness, the Wood Man tells her that he hopes she'll come back to visit him. What he doesn't tell her is that he plans to visit her. As it turns out, he has a few interesting (and definitely non-human) contacts in and around the Trolberg area.

The Wood Man's own house is an amazing wooden structure full of music, art and books on everything from "Tree Ring Tales" to "Giants of Old". Hilda is always welcome to share his extensive library, his knowledge of magical creatures, and his tea. She appreciates everything except his tea. He's not sure why that's a problem, but to each his own.



THE SPARROW SCOUTS OF TROLBERG

The mission of the Sparrow Scouts is best summed up in the Sparrow Scout Oath:



Hilda takes this oath to heart; however, Hilda's heart is bigger than most, and she's used to following it wherever it takes her... which is usually far off the prescribed Sparrow Scout path!

As it turns out, Hilda's mum was also a Sparrow Scout when she was a kid, and not only that, she earned the most badges in her flock by the time she left! Hilda would really like to earn one more badge than her mother did. There are lots of them to earn: the Friend to Animals Badge, the Camping Badge, the Fundraising Badge, the First Aid Badge, the Stonework Badge, the Young Entrepreneur Badge, the Cycling Badge, and that's just a start. The problem for Hilda is that most of the good deeds that she performs are not covered in the Sparrow Scout Badge Manual; there are no badges for helping a homeless house spirit... or rescuing an enormous, rampaging hound... or humanely removing a bell from a troll's nose... or most of the good things that Hilda ends up doing!

Despite a few bumps along the way, however, Hilda is happy to be a member of the Sparrow Scouts. She enjoys all the activities, from sting ball to camping to role-playing first aid scenarios with as much drama as possible. Badges or no badges, being a Sparrow gives Hilda new ways to explore Trolberg and new opportunities for adventure.

It also gives Hilda the chance to make some new friends who are actual kids (or as her mum puts it, "proper friends"): David and Frida, two of her fellow Sparrow Scouts, who enjoy showing her some of their favourite nooks and crannies of Trolberg.



DAVID

SPARROW SCOUT BADGE HE'S MOST LIKELY TO EARN:
Friend to Bugs

An earnest and hard-working Sparrow Scout, he's always the last to know when there's a bug on his head; many a happy insect has come to rest on him without fear of being swatted away. He is also a bit clumsy. Flyers seem to fly out of his hands. Tents have a habit of collapsing once he crawls inside. Fold-out maps fold themselves over his head. He is often in a state of affable bewilderment. He has a knack for focusing on the wrong thing at the wrong time, which means that he is likely to miss the forest giant for the trees.



FRIDA

SPARROW SCOUT BADGE SHE'S MOST LIKELY TO EARN:
All of them!

A high-achieving, super badge-earning Sparrow Scout, she probably has the Sparrow Scout manual memorised. She's a resourceful person and a generous friend who shows Hilda a secret place along the Trolberg wall where she's found it easy to climb up and get a good view of both the city and the mountainsides around.



THE HOLE

THE RUINS

THE OLD BRIDGE

THE WOODS

THE WILDERNESS

ROCK POOL

THE BLUE
PINE FOREST

THE GREAT FOREST

THE TROLL ROCK

THE WOOD MAN'S HOUSE

TROLBERG
THIS WAY

TROLBERG AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

If you look at a map of the northern wilderness and compare it to a map of Trolberg and its surroundings, you will immediately see the difference between the two places: one has barely any imprint at all of a human presence... the other is crowded with houses and buildings and surrounded by a wall that marks the boundary between the human territory and the wilderness.

Trolberg is a big city with a busy harbour, a bustling train station, and even an air field for dirigibles. There are lots of people, lots of noise, lots of traffic. There are nice parks and trails and a campground within the city walls. There is also an excellent library, and Hilda discovers that the librarian there has an uncanny ability to hand her the book she wants even before she asks for it! (see: Trolberg Field Guide – WITCHES)

Each section of the city has at least one bell tower and some of the bigger sections have two or three! Trolls hate the sound of bells, so when the bells ring every hour throughout Trolberg, it's not just for telling the time - it also stops the trolls from getting too close. As Hilda will discover, the surrounding mountainsides are crawling with them. Everyone in the city is perpetually under the gaze of hundreds of trolls at any one time. They observe the humans with a contemptuous curiosity and a lingering sense of injustice.



The human founders of Trolberg built the city in the heart of troll country, in the middle of the valley where all trolls originally crawled out of the earth. In the early days of the city, there were regular conflicts between the humans and the trolls, but now the trolls mostly keep their distance and to themselves.

In addition to the bell towers, Trolberg has a wall that surrounds the entire city in order to protect itself from trolls and other dangerous wild creatures. The Trolberg wall was originally built when the fledgling city underwent numerous attacks from trolls, particularly the large, giant-like trolls. In the present day, however, the wall mostly serves as a useful marker for knowing what area is safe and accounted for (anything inside the wall) and what isn't (anything outside the wall).



The wall is old and crumbling in places, and it covers so much ground that a lot of it isn't regularly checked or patched up as often as it probably should be. There are various gates, watchtowers and bell towers at regular intervals along the wall. As Hilda will discover, there are also a couple of secret rooms within it, as well as cracks that are big enough for small things to go in and out, and hidden tunnels that run under it!

The immediate wilderness surrounding Trolberg is considered relatively safe as long as you stick to the roads that lead to the city. Most of the trolls are wary of speeding cars like any other creature or person so they stay away. So, as long as you stick to the roads, you should be fine driving through. It's just that you don't want to go off the beaten path unless you know exactly what you are doing.



The forests and mountainsides near the city are much more dangerous. The mountains are full of caves and tunnels and supposedly riddled with trolls (although no one has actually ventured there or at least successfully documented it and lived). The forests are seen as endlessly mysterious and are home to who knows what!

Hilda, of course, would love to know what. Some of the forests have reputations of witches or being never-ending, but the facts and the myths are extremely muddled up. The deeper you get into the woods or into the mountains, the more dangerous and strange and large the trolls and the other creatures become (or at least that's the conventional wisdom).



In addition, Hilda will discover that there are actually some people living outside the Trolberg wall, but they are considered loners, eccentrics and potentially dangerous. They may even convene with trolls. A grizzled old adventurer in a cabin. A strange family who may or may not be malevolent tricksters...

The Trolberg harbour is full of cargo ships and passenger ships. Sea spirits are not uncommon, but they are seen only during certain seasons. Part of the harbour is industrial, and part of it is a waterfront that is like a little village of houseboats. Every now and then, there's an empty looking boat that is actually a densely packed cruise ship for elves. Of course, Hilda learns that the docks have their dangers as well: beware of the occasional salt lion who wanders up on the docks, and watch out for the treacherous Rat King.

BEASTS, SPRITES AND SPIRITS OF THE GREATER TROLBERG AREA: A FIELD GUIDE

TROLLS

The popular image of the troll is that of a lumbering, dim-witted, child-eating monster, but as Hilda will eventually discover, trolls exhibit a range of behaviours and habits that paint a much more complicated picture. To be clear: some trolls DO eat humans, preferring us roasted with root vegetables or, surprisingly, baked into a fluffy soufflé (see: “Traditional Troll Cooking”, if you have a strong stomach). But the ghastly behaviour of this small sub-set of individuals has unfortunately cast a rather bad light on the genus as a whole: most trolls are as wary of humans as we are of them.



There are a number of troll species and sub-species to be found in the Greater Trolberg region. The majority of which pose no threat to humans and are quite content to live their lives unnoticed and undisturbed, though certain old grievances do linger. The city of Trolberg was built by humans in the middle of troll country, an intrusion that some troll lineages have never quite forgotten. Indeed, most of the human residents of Trolberg would be surprised to learn that trolls have their own customs, music, social events and even languages. Troll language, however, is often imperceptible to human ears and sounds like the earth rumbling or distant thunder.

As Hilda will discover, there is diversity among trolls. Some trolls are loners, but some live in family groups. Some trolls have even moved into abandoned cottages and cabins and have started to mimic human behaviour. Some trolls would eat a human in a heartbeat, but others frown on this practice.

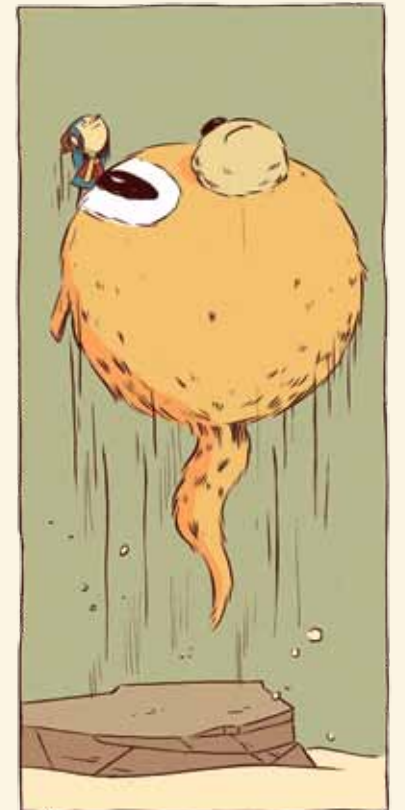
Most trolls are quite large, towering over adult humans, and many have large noses or long tails, which are a source of great pride in troll society. Some species have a thick, stony-looking outer hide, while others may be partially covered with dense matted pelts, which are often described as smelling “mossy” or “like stewed beets”. Trolls are exclusively nocturnal, as direct exposure to sunlight triggers an unpleasant but (usually) temporary petrification response: the troll is turned to stone and remains immobilised until nightfall. As such, they prefer to make their homes in dark, shadowy places, chiefly under mountains and of course in caves. They have a notorious aversion to the sound of bells ringing. Bells have long been used by human settlements to keep trolls at bay, although the ethics (and necessity) of this practice have come into question in recent times.



WOFFS

Familiar yet oddly majestic, woffs are large, limbless, flying beasts that are often seen in and around the countryside surrounding Trolberg. Hilda has been known to hop on a woff when she needs a quick way to get to the top of a giant and/or a mountain. Harmless (and generally aloof) to humans, woffs are famous for their complex and largely inscrutable migration habits. While most creatures that migrate do so on an annual or biannual timetable, woffs are known to migrate all year round, even as often as twice in a single week. Sometimes they travel entire continents and sometimes they might only go to the other side of a valley. Their herds are constantly moving from place to place, in accordance with some strange internal clockwork that only the woffs themselves understand.

At certain times of the year they seem to vanish entirely and during these periods even the most learned woffologists haven't the slightest idea where they've gone. As a result, some aspects of the woff life cycle remain completely mysterious to modern researchers. It should come as no surprise that no human has ever laid eyes on a newborn woff...



DEER FOXES

See Twig description on pg (9).





THE GIANTS OF OLD

I **Fjallmar** – Father of horses and dragons. Wilder and less forgiving than his fellow giants, he was a great antagonist of the little people, who feared him greatly. II **Aldin** – Looked so by the other giants as a leader of men. He was the first to take the leap and leave the valleys for good. III **Hir** – The oldest of the last generation of giants and by far the largest. His ancient beard was known as a driving, alien ecosystem. Many of the stranger creatures that wander the Earth first appeared after they tumbled out of it. IV **Valfreyja** – Gardener and planter of men. The first mountains were sculpted in her appearance. V **Halldir** – Descended from a line of great warrior giants, he was actually one of the most gentle. He was greatly sympathetic to the little people and is the giant most fondly remembered in their tales. He did not leave with the others and it is unclear what became of him. VI **Jorgen** – The last guardian.

Summoned to his duty at a young age, Jorgen has served as the Earth's watchman for perhaps thousands of years. VII **Myrke** – A mysterious and shadowy giant associated with ill health and bad omens. Despite this he was terribly nice. VIII **Kald** – The Winterbringer. Usually only seen during blizzards as a vague and colossal shadow, it is unclear whether she is made of snow or simply caked in it. IX **Heimskr** – Had one eye and a chilly head. X **Sigmund** – A cousin of Jorgen's and a rival to Aldin's leadership. He was known for his long, luxurious fire which he washed twice a day in the sea. XI **Jaharrok** – Lived deep within the Mountain of Mifurune. He rarely saw the other giants, preferring the company of his six extra heads. XII **Drif** – Kald's older (yet smaller) brother. XIII **Bjorg** – The ocean of the group. He was fearful of the other giants and not well liked. When the others left he went into hiding.

Trolls and nixes are descended from him. XIV **The Knolem** – A mean-spirited, living hill. XV **Forest Giants** – The closest living relatives to the giants of old. XVI **The Ice Man** – Unrelated to the giants. It is made of pure ice and is sometimes seen walking slowly across the plains. XVII **Blida** – The smallest of the true giants. She didn't feel the others took her seriously enough. XVIII **Beckhus the Thunderworm** – Cursed with an unfortunate appearance, Beckhus struck fear into the little people and made the other giants uncomfortable. XIX **Elaarr** – Fascinated by how he could affect the landscape, he would spend his nights editing rivets, moving rocks and replanting trees, just to see how the people would react in the morning. XX **Geri** – The smartest giant and the most fun to be around. She once decided to see how long she could balance an enormous boulder on her head. The legend says that it never fell off.

THE OLD GIANTS

Most of what was ever known about the Old Giants has long since been forgotten – the secrets of their race and of their time here in the valleys of greater Trolberg have vanished along with them. What is generally agreed upon are these three facts:

- The Old Giants were the first inhabitants of this part of the world.
- Not long after humans (the “little people” as they called us) arrived on the scene, they vanished.
- They were, ahem, “freaking HUGE.”

Beyond that, everything we presume to know about the Old Giants comes from folktales and conjecture: that they acted as solemn “guardians” of the earth, taking turns keeping watch from a mountain in thousand-year shifts; that the arrival of the “little people” led to a brief period of conflict and discord between the two species; that their earwax was so thick and plentiful that it could be used in place of pine pitch when caulking ship hulls.

The names of some of the more famous among the Old Giants still linger on: Mount Halldór is named for the gentle warrior giant, great friend and defender of us little people; Björg’s Bay is named for the infamous trickster giant, so-called father of the trolls. Many of the stranger creatures of the world are said to have tumbled out of mighty Hár’s beard, and it’s believed that much of greater Trolberg’s geography itself was shaped by the giant Einarr, the great mountain-forged and riversmith. When one stands atop one of Trolberg’s bell towers and gazes out over the countryside, one sees the world that the Old Giants wrought.

The Old Giants are of course no more, but it has long been whispered that when they took their leave from this world, a few stayed behind – though their whereabouts and current activities remain unknown.

FOREST GIANTS

The Forest Giants are the closest living relatives of the old giants, and are quite common in the woodlands surrounding Trolberg. They might object to being described as “common” as they are notoriously testy, and



their pride is easily damaged. This could be as a result of the forest giants being constantly compared to their larger and more celebrated brethren.

Though not exactly dangerous to humans, they are best avoided all the same, unless you have a particular soft spot for hard-to-please wet blankets that are 8 stories tall. They can be easily identified in the wild by their calls of “*I told you so*” and “[*BIG SIGH with eyeroll*]”. One should NEVER, under any circumstances ask a forest giant for directions or advice: even if you follow it to the letter, he will still tell you you’ve done it all wrong.

WATER SPIRITS

Commonly divided into the subcategories of river spirits and sea spirits, the two main groups of water spirits differ only in size; the saltwater variety being much larger. Resembling amorphous, watery globules, water spirits can sometimes be seen poking up above the waves, but they prefer to spend most of their time deep below the surface.

Famous for their strange, other-worldly music, tales abound of water spirits using songs to lure hapless sailors to a watery grave, though the truth of the matter is much less sinister. Water spirits are actually quite gentle, with an inquisitive, childlike nature. They have a great curiosity about us “dry ones”, but they occasionally forget that we humans have a tendency to, well, DROWN when submerged for too long. An invitation to visit a water spirit’s home, while a rare privilege and a great honour, should always be politely declined. Better to become acquainted somewhere closer to the shore!



WEATHER SPIRITS

Weather spirits most often appear in the form of individual clouds that will rain, snow, sleet or simply whip up the wind on a highly localised patch of ground. At times, they can even target a single person. Weather spirits sometimes unite to create a bigger and more widespread weather event, although any large gathering of weather spirits usually devolves into a competition over who can rain the hardest, sleet the sharpest, make the wind the most variable in the least amount of time, and so on.

Be advised that weather spirits are unpredictable and fickle; they are easily offended by criticism and suspicious of praise, so it is best to simply deal with whatever weather comes your way and get on with it!



MOUNTAIN SPIRITS

One can often find mountain spirits hiding in plain sight; as living mountains, it's easy to mistake one for a large hill or a bluff. They may seem immobile, but they do in fact move, albeit very slowly. Mountain spirits can live for thousands upon thousands of years, so they are never in any particular sort of hurry. They move slowly, they think slowly, they speak slowly and they live slowly. Most mountain spirits are typically too sluggish to be anything other than completely benign, though there are a few notorious examples to the contrary. Chief among them is the nasty living spirit known as The Knolem, whose seismic antics have vexed unsuspecting hikers for hundreds of years – it's not known what put him in such a foul mood.

It's also not known how mountain spirits reproduce, but baby mountain spirits (barely mounds, really) have been known to turn up in the most unlikely places, such as backyards, parks and parking lot median strips.

ICE SPIRITS (INFORMALLY, "THE ICE MAN")

Ice spirits resemble giants in their massive size, though the two species are unrelated. Until recently, it was thought that there was only one such creature, occasionally spotted slowly roaming the plains outside Trolberg in deepest winter. But now most experts agree that the famous "Ice Man of Steinnharr" is actually part of a larger population of ice spirits. That they are solitary creatures who all look more-or-less identical has perhaps further confused the issue.

Usually restricted to the coldest mountain peaks, during the coldest months they are able to creep down into lower terrains, bringing with them deep frosts and bitter winds. Though bad for crops, their presence is said to create ideal skiing conditions; and "The Ice Man" has long served as the unofficial mascot of the Trolberg Winter Recreation Council.

BARGHESTS

Like the domesticated dogs to which they are distantly related, the temperament of a barghest (which takes the form of a large, black hound) is greatly determined by its training and upbringing. Frequently kept as pets by trolls and giants, a barghest that is pampered by a kind master will usually have a friendly, playful demeanour, while one that is trained to be aggressive, or one that has been mistreated by a cruel master, can often be dangerous. In the field it can be very difficult to tell one sort from the other from a distance, though as a general rule of thumb, if you are ever in a situation where a barghest is bounding straight towards you at full speed, it's probably best just to RUN.



THE VITTRA OR BULB PEOPLE

These plump little fellows resemble onion bulbs and live their entire lives just below the surface of the earth. They're said to keep great herds of "ground cows", though what these might be is unknown. Sometimes the stalks on their heads will poke up above the ground, but more often than not they might be toiling away right under your feet, and you'd never be any the wiser.

They are a friendly but shy people, and as such it's important to observe certain rules of etiquette when dealing with them; when emptying a pot of water from a camping stove (or answering the call of nature, for that matter), it's best to call out a friendly warning first, lest you give any underground vittra in your vicinity an unanticipated watering!



THUNDERBIRDS

Thunderbirds often take the form of huge, majestic ravens and are said to bring good luck, though this has been greatly debated. In any case, they are famous for their ability to rapidly change their size (often taking a form no larger than normal ravens, they are nothing if not humble) and create isolated electrical storms in the sky.

Though usually solitary birds, evidence exists of occasions where a great many of them have gathered at once, perhaps as part of a courtship behaviour, causing thunderstorms of unfathomable proportions and wreaking havoc on local utility grids. (See: the great Halldór's Eve blackout of '78).

In addition, they spend their lives travelling the world. As a result, they bring great wisdom and secrets from all corners of the Earth.



WITCHES

Besides trolls, there are perhaps none more misunderstood in the history of Trolberg than its poor witches; they are hardly the pox-spreading, hex-casting brides-of-Satan they are often made out to be. Yes, they may be old and crone-like, and yes, they may smell a little like old mothballs, but all in all they are actually quite agreeable. Indeed, they can be quite helpful in a number of situations, dedicated as they are to the preservation of long-forgotten books, arcane knowledge, and a surprisingly robust collection of ancient one-dish casserole recipes. Their chief magical power is their uncanny ability to trace the connections between seemingly unrelated events, and to rescue odd scraps of wisdom from the jaws of human forgetfulness.

The Witches' Tower, deep in the Huldrawood, once functioned as their main abbey. Centuries of persecution, mistreatment and an unfortunate mould infestation have left the tower abandoned and their numbers greatly diminished. Nevertheless, it's rumoured that a few lonely witches still keep the traditions of their ancient order alive: they allegedly publish a monthly newsletter, complete with witch news, classifieds and a rather challenging crossword puzzle. In addition, one of them may just happen to work at the Trolberg Library.

THE RAT KING

Rat kings come and rat kings go - any time two or more rats get their tails tangled together, you've got a rat king on your hands (and, likely, a pest problem in your home). But in the darker corners of Trolberg there have long been whispers of the one true rat king: a massive, squirming ball of rats so large and so hopelessly tangled together that the individual rodents have come to act, think and speak as one - truly an "it" rather than a "they".

Each rat who joins the king adds to the collective its own memories of everything it's done and seen; private conversations overheard, hidden passages scurried through and dastardly deeds witnessed in the dead of night. As such, the rat king has become the de facto broker of all Trolberg's secrets, and it will sell them to you for a price!

**Please be aware that the rat king only accepts the following payment methods: juicy gossip, gold coins and most fine cheeses (check with your local cheesemonger).*



SEA SERPENTS

Perhaps due to their enormous size, sea serpents are quite rare. It's theorised that only a few dozen or so can coexist in the world at any given time, on account of their expansive feeding ranges and voracious appetites. Luckily for us, they only eat vast (and we do mean VAST) quantities of herring and unhatched salt-lion eggs, though they have been known to swallow up entire ships completely by accident, as the unfortunate incident involving the commercial Serpent-Seeing™ tour boat has recently demonstrated.

Sea serpents spend most of their lives far out at sea, though every thousand years or so one will visit the Björgfjord, where the damage they cause to local fishing ships, piers, and seaside t-shirt shoppes has historically been quite devastating.

THE MARRA

Given the terrifying reputation of this clan of female "nightmare spirits", it's no wonder that most humans choose to avoid the deeper parts of the Huldrawood, which they're said to haunt. But one of the few first hand accounts of the marra (from a troop of intrepid Sparrow Scouts, no less, who got lost on a camp out) paints a rather different picture of these nocturnal specters.

More waif than wraith, the marra are said to take the shape of pale, raven-haired adolescent human females, with facial markings that resemble dark eye-makeup and a general air of studied aloofness. When not engaged in complex inter-clique status disputes, the marra have a true gift for spinning spine-tingling campfire tales, and their elaborate pranks and practical jokes are second-to-none. They do love a good scare, though it's all in the name of fun (that is, unless, they hear you've been gossiping about them behind their backs).

HILDA ADVENTURES

A Hilda story is driven by a unique combination of the magical and the matter-of-fact, equal parts mystery, adventure and character comedy. In each 22-minute episode, Hilda does more than simply meet a “magical creature of the week”; she discovers unexpected connections between the creature’s world, the human world and her own every day life.

To be sure, there are dangerous creatures in these stories, but there are no one-dimensional “bad guys”. Hilda is not a superhero who smacks down supervillains. She’s a little girl with the curiosity and courage to sort out the misunderstandings, misdirections and mistakes that create conflict and tension between co-existing groups, both magical and human.

There are no throw-away characters in these stories. A brief appearance of an intriguing creature or location in one episode will be further developed in future episodes so that the audience is always rewarded for paying attention to the details and the little moments, just as Hilda does!

HILDA AND THE MIDNIGHT GIANT

See pilot script

HILDA AND THE BLACK HOUND

See accompanying picture book

HILDA AND THE HARBOUR SERPENT

WRITTEN BY STEPHANIE SIMPSON

Raven Leader leads the Sparrow Scouts, including Hilda, on a walk through some trails in the oldest and probably the wildest park in Trolberg. She is showing them the way to the Trolberg observatory, which is located atop a hill in the park. In a couple of days, a comet that passes through the Trolberg skies only once every thousand or so years will be visible. The Sparrows and their families are invited to come to the observatory on a night time hike to get a fantastic view of it, plus it will earn them points toward their astronomy badges!

Hilda is following along with the group, but she can’t resist checking out what’s OFF the trail, and once they reach the bottom of the hill where the observatory sits, she spots something interesting poking out of the ground beyond the bushes lining the trail. She goes to check it out and discovers that it’s a large, curving something... it could be a bone maybe? But when she looks closer, she sees that it has a pattern carved on it! The pattern looks like waves maybe... and then she hears, “HILDA!” Oops, she runs back to rejoin her fellow Sparrows!

Back at Scout Hall, Raven Leader reminds them to invite their families to the night time observatory hike. Also, next week, they’ll be starting a new unit on Troll Safety. Hilda is excited about that! Raven Leader passes out the Sparrow Scout Guide to Troll Safety to every Sparrow.

When Hilda’s mum picks her up, she is excited that she and Hilda can go together on the hike to the observatory to view the comet. Maybe she’ll wear her old Sparrow scarf just to relive her old Sparrow days! She hopes she can find it; Hilda hopes she can’t. As they pull up to

their flat, they unload some groceries from the car and head inside. Since their hands are full, they leave the door to their flat open behind them while they bring in the bags.

And then a familiar head peeks in the open door. It’s the Wood Man. He casually strolls in with a travel bag and a log for the fire.

When Hilda and her mum turn back to close the door, they’re surprised to find him already lying down in front of their couch reading a book, just like old times.

So, he still doesn’t knock, observes Hilda. Does he plan on moving in, she wonders. Nope. He’s just passing through on his way to a big event in the countryside near Trolberg, and he thought he’d stop by for a visit. He could use a cup of tea. Hilda’s mum offers him some of their tea, but he pulls out some twigs and dirt from his bag. All he needs is some hot water.

While the Wood Man happily sips a cup of twiggy tea, Hilda wants to know what the big event is that he’s attending – does it have something to do with Trolberg? Can she come? No, he tells her, and people from Trolberg are not invited nor would they want to come, for that matter. It’s an annual market near Troll Cave. He has attended it many times over the years. He floats his wooden raft down the river, ties it up at the Trolberg dock and then either hikes or hops on a woff to the open air market. It’s a huge event where he’s always able to make some excellent trades in rare books and music with one particular troll. The market occurs only at night, of course, because it’s organised and run by trolls.

A troll-run market!? Hilda, of course, wants to go. And she’s not afraid of trolls. She already met one and he didn’t even try to eat her! “Yes, a troll rarely, if ever, eats a child who is alone,” says the Wood Man.

“Which proves that trolls are actually very nice,” says Hilda.

“No, it proves that one small child is not very filling,” says the Wood Man.

The Wood Man goes on to say that in his experience, trolls are not one thing or the other: some are nice and some are mean, some are good and some are bad. You just have to be cool and know what’s what.

Hilda argues that she has always been cool around trolls (despite a quick flashback to her screaming her head off as the troll lifted her toward his mouth). She informs the Wood Man that she’s now a Sparrow Scout, and as a Sparrow Scout, she’s learning all about trolls. She shows the Wood Man her Sparrow Scout Guide to Troll Safety, which was just handed out at today’s meeting. She admits that she hasn’t exactly read it yet, but she will, cover to cover.

The Wood Man looks through the Sparrow Scout Guide to Troll Safety. As far as he’s concerned, most of the information is, at best, misguided, and, at worst, just plain wrong. Perhaps he really should take her to the Troll Market, for the sake of her education. If she’s going to learn things about trolls, she should learn some real and truly useful things. Hilda hits him with a please, please, please. He agrees to take her with him that night, on the condition that she stay with him at all times, and he adds, “Please make sure to bring your recorder along.”

That night, the Wood Man takes Hilda via a woff (and the Wood Man is much better at getting a woff to fly right than Hilda is) to the Troll Market. It’s a big, rustic gathering near Troll Cave. Some trolls have carts with their wares, but others have simply spread things out on rocks. She gets an eyeful as the Wood Man takes her around. Some of the trolls are so grumpy that they end up fighting with anyone who tries to buy their wares. There are also a few trolls doing some very primitive magic tricks and boulder juggling. She hears a lot of strange rumbling and growling. The Wood Man explains that trolls speak in their own languages and dialects, and many of them sound like thunder or growls.

The trolls pretty much ignore Hilda until one troll notices that there’s a human, albeit a small one, among them! At first, she’s just a curiosity as one troll calls over another to point her out, but soon, she and the Wood Man are surrounded by a group of trolls. The group become a bit rowdy and demands to know who brought a human to their market? It’s a bad omen. Nothing good ever comes from contact with these humans, that’s for sure!

The trolls are getting a bit worked up. The Wood Man stays cool and tells Hilda that now would be a good time to practice her recorder. “Now?!?” says Hilda. He nods. Okay. She takes it

out of her satchel and starts to play. It's loud, squawky, squeaky and discordant. The troll crowd loves it. Now THAT'S music to a troll's ears. A human who can play like that can't be all bad. Hilda is relieved. "It's a good thing you gave me this recorder," she says. "It's even better that you're not embarrassed to play it in public," says the Wood Man. Hilda doesn't know if she should take that as a compliment or not...

They make their way to the booth where the Wood Man plans to trade. This booth belongs to a troll who is actually cultured and literate, an oddity among trolls, but obviously not an impossibility. He trades in rare books and music as well as the occasional object d'troll art. He is happy to see the Wood Man and interested to meet Hilda. The Wood Man trades him a book on Forest Giants for a hard-to-find book called Stones that Sing, Scream and Snore. He also combs through the music collection and finds a couple of gems. The troll enjoys showing Hilda his wares as well as filling her in on some of the history of Trolberg from a troll's perspective.

One thing Hilda learns is that when humans came and built their settlement right in the middle of troll country, many important troll artifacts were lost or simply buried in the city never to be seen again by the trolls. He shows her drawings in a book of some of them, including a huge and ancient horn, called the Belchenhorn (if you pronounce it in the original troll, the word sounds like a cross between a guttural growl and belch with lots of consonants crowded together). The Belchenhorn was used to rid the harbour of sea monsters. Every thousand years or so, a comet would pass through the skies, and at such time, a sea monster would usually also appear and occupy the harbour. Trolls used to wrestle with the sea monster in order to drive it away, but they eventually discovered that the easiest way to get rid of it was to blow the Belchenhorn. The sound of it sends a sea monster packing, simple as that. Sadly, the ancient Belchenhorn is buried somewhere inside the gates of Trolberg.

But Hilda thinks she knows where it's buried - she's pretty sure she saw part of it sticking up out of the ground on her Sparrow Scout hike! It's much too big for her to carry, but she could show the troll where it is, and he could retrieve it. The troll appreciates Hilda's offer, but he doesn't think it's such a good idea for him to come within the city walls. Of course he'd love to reclaim the ancient Belchenhorn, but it's not worth stirring up trouble between trolls and the citizens of Trolberg. Trolls and humans may not exactly be cosy with each other, but at least things are quiet between them and it's better if they stay that way. The sky is starting to lighten, so it's time to go. The troll tells Hilda that it's been a pleasure to meet her. Hilda feels the same.

At a Sparrow Scout meeting the next day, the Sparrows practice some of the Troll Safety skills from their Guide. Hilda goes dramatically off-script in a couple of the troll-human role-playing scenarios much to the confusion of her partners, David and Frida!

After the Sparrow Scout meeting, Hilda and her mum walk down to the harbour to say goodbye to the Wood Man, who's about to shove off in his raft and head back up the river to home. The bells all toll. Hilda asks her mum if it's really necessary for those bells to toll so loudly every single hour. Hilda's mum thinks it is. They keep the city safe from trolls and that's a good thing. Trolls are dangerous. "SOME of them are dangerous, but not all of them," says Hilda.

"Maybe, but it's complicated to sort it out and it could be terrible if you get it wrong," answers Hilda's mum.

When Hilda and her mum arrive at the docks to see the Wood Man off, there's a lot of commotion! As it turns out, an enormous sea serpent has entered the harbour and coiled itself around the bottom, blocking access to the river or to the open ocean. The sea serpent is churning up the water, tossing ships around like pieces of popcorn and making it impossible to go in or out of the harbour. It's quite an emergency and the harbour is closed while the city tries to figure out how to handle this crisis. Trouble is, they don't really have a sea serpent emergency management plan in place since it's never happened before, at least not in recent human memory. Hilda and the Wood Man share a look.

The Wood Man can't leave yet, so he goes back with Hilda and her mum to their flat. They watch the news, where there are reports of various plans to get rid of the sea serpent, from harpooning to hauling, none of them are very promising, and all of them sound as if someone is bound to get hurt in the process. Hilda comments that the harbour serpent does seem pretty vicious. The Wood Man says that actually, harbour serpents are just as easily frightened, which makes them overreact to everything. If anything comes even a little bit close to it - WHACK - goes the tail! How long will a harbour serpent stay around, Hilda wants to know. The Wood Man has heard of harbour serpents that hung around for hundreds of years!

Hilda and the Wood Man know that the best way to get rid of the harbour serpent is a blast from the ancient Belchenhorn buried in the park. What if their troll friend could sneak into the city, get the horn, blow it, and then go back to his cave before anybody knows he's even been there? Harbour serpent problem solved for the humans (and the Wood Man), precious artifact recovered for the trolls!

Hilda wants to go out and find that troll right away, but the Wood Man says he'll do it alone. Hilda is annoyed, but the Wood Man is firm: having a human in the mix will only make the troll nervous, even if that human is Hilda. He does, however, need Hilda's help with the plan, assuming he can convince the troll to do it. Fine. Hilda makes a map for the Wood Man that shows where the Belchenhorn is located, near the observatory hill. But how to sneak a troll into Trolberg? Keep it simple: smash through the wall near the park. What about lights from the city? Will it be dark enough for a troll's safety? It should be, because in honour of the comet, the city is dimming or blacking out as many lights as possible so the citizens of Trolberg can enjoy the comet viewing tomorrow night.

The Wood Man heads out. Hilda wishes him luck. She also wishes she were going along.

The next night, Hilda and her mum gather with other Sparrows and their families to walk to the observatory to view the comet. It's dark and they use torches along the path. There's an excited, hushed buzz among the hikers. At one point, everyone freezes when they hear a loud crashing sound in the distance, but after a second, all is quiet again. Everyone murmurs wondering what that was... it sort of sounded like... like... "a troll smashing through a wall!" finishes Hilda enthusiastically.

"Or some woffs taking off from a tree and knocking down some branches. A night time hike always makes everything seem a little scary, doesn't it?" says the Raven Leader, and everyone laughs with nervous relief.

When they reach the observatory, everyone is excited to see the comet, which should appear any time now! Everyone is focused on the skies...

But one of the Sparrow parents looks away for a second and sees something moving at the bottom of the hill, something big... a look of disbelief and then fear crosses his face, and then he yells, "TROLL!" Everyone looks, gasps, points! It's true - there's a huge troll lumbering about at the bottom of the hill!

Raven Leader springs into Troll Safety action. She runs to ring the bells in the bell tower next to the observatory! "If you have a bell, ring it!" she calls. Some people do have bells in their backpacks and they pull them out and begin to jingle, ring and clang them!

At the bottom of the hill, the Troll is completely taken by surprise. He reels in bell-induced agony! And agony turns to anger...

In his anger, he charges up the hill, with the Wood Man calling after him to run the other way!

Hilda runs right for the troll. Her mum yells, "Hilda!" Hilda yells back, "It's okay, Mum, he's friendly!" At which point, the troll, in his distress,

smashes a part of the observatory with the Belchenhorn.

Hilda runs and jumps up on the troll, climbing up to his head. “Don’t worry, if you go the way I tell you, you’ll be all right!” she says.

“I knew this was a bad idea,” says the troll. “Where...is...the...harbour?” he pants.

Hilda thinks they can make it down to the harbour to blow the horn if he can just be cool and calm and follow her directions. Plus, Hilda believes that once people see him blow the horn and get rid of the harbour serpent, they’ll realise that he’s friend, not foe.

As they run through the city, with Hilda yelling which way to go, and sometimes getting it wrong, but mostly getting it right, more and more bells begin to ring! People run for the bell towers and even open their windows to jingle their own small bells as loudly as they can. It’s an all-out troll emergency!

By the time Hilda and the troll reach the harbour, the troll tries to blow the horn, but he’s so out of breath from running that his first two tries are a bust. “You can do it,” says Hilda. “For you, little girl,” pants the troll, and he tries one more time to blow the Belchenhorn. Success!

It’s so loud that for a split second afterward, everything goes silent, the bells, the shouting, everything.

At the sound of the horn blast, the sea serpent rears up and then slithers out of the harbour, diving back down to the depths.

Hilda gives the troll as much of a hug as you can give when you’re riding on its head!

At that moment, however, fire engines equipped with bright searchlights pull up to the docks. They’re going to turn them on full blast and turn the troll to stone, and then who knows what they’ll do with it! Hilda tells them to stop – it’s okay! The troll just did them a favour by getting rid of the harbor serpent and nobody was hurt!

But they don’t listen – they’re sure that Hilda is in mortal danger. More trucks with lights are pulling up... hands are just about to throw the switches... for the troll, there’s no place to run, no place to hide, except...

The deep, dark waters of the harbour! The troll dives off the docks, swimming down and down, out of reach of humans, bells and searchlights.

The only problem is that he’s taken Hilda with him! She’s struggling that deep under the water, sinking, sinking...

But the troll reaches out with the Belchenhorn and scoops her up, then lifts her out of the water and slides her back onto the dry dock! She gasps for air, but she’s fine.

The troll is gone, swimming his way to a human-free shore where he can safely return to his cave.

A fireman runs up to Hilda with a blanket. Is she alright? Yes, she says, she’s fine. Cold, wet, but fine.

Hilda’s mum and the Wood Man join Hilda and the fireman. “I’m alright, Mum, I’m alright,” says Hilda to her mum, who’s breathless from running and little teary as well. “We haven’t had anybody inside the city almost eaten by a troll in a long, long time,” says the fireman.

“He wasn’t trying to eat me!” protests Hilda.

The fireman shakes his head, and turns to her mum. “That’s the trauma talking. She’s in denial, but at least she’s safe now,” he says.

The fireman leaves Hilda wrapped in the blanket with her mum and the Wood Man. The three of them share a moment of silence. For the first time, Hilda looks sad.

“Did anybody notice that the troll wasn’t trying to hurt them?” says Hilda.

The Wood Man shrugs. “It’s hard to say. People usually see what they want to see.”

“But you saw it, right, Mum?” asks Hilda.

Hilda’s mum hesitates. “I saw that he was dangerous and that he could have hurt you, but... he didn’t. I’m not sure what that means. All I know is that you are very brave,” says her mum.

“But, Mum, he was brave too,” says Hilda. She turns to the Wood Man, “Will he be alright?”

The Wood Man says the troll should be fine. It’s a pretty short swim for him to the shores just outside of Trolberg and then right on to his cave.

Hilda nods, then sighs. “Did we miss the comet? Because it’s not coming around again for another thousand years.”

“I... I don’t know,” says her mum, but then the Wood Man points up at the sky with his twiggy arm!

Everyone stares up at the ball of fire and ice tearing across the sky, and for a split second, the world seems like a place where anything is possible.

Back to Hilda on the dock. Time to return home. The Wood Man pushes off in his raft, while Hilda and her mum wave goodbye. They start for home as well.

Hilda sees a small bell that someone has dropped on the ground. “Hold on, Mum!” she says. She picks up the bell and throws it as hard as she can out into the water, where it disappears.

THE END



HILDA AND THE TROLL THISTLE

WRITTEN BY STEPHANIE SIMPSON

Hilda's mum has always worked, but now that they've moved to Trolberg, she's getting more assignments than ever before. In the wilderness, her work pace was steady but slow, but in the city she finds herself managing multiple projects with colliding deadlines.

Hilda's mum tells her apologetically that for the next couple of days she has to work double time, to complete two different projects, which means that she can't do much else, including going out and having fun with Hilda. That's no problem for Hilda, however, because she was planning on going out with fellow Sparrows, David and Frida, anyway. They are heading to the park to work on their Friend to Plants badges. They need to find and identify ten local plants. Hilda's mum is happy to hear it - she will feel guilt-free focusing on her work while Hilda is out with her friends working on a Sparrow Scout badge!

Hilda's mum whips up a triple batch of cucumber sandwiches and a thermos of tea for Hilda, David and Frida to enjoy on their outing to the park. David and Frida pick Hilda up, and Hilda and Twig head out the door, leaving Hilda's mum to her work. She sits down at her desk, then frowns - where is her favorite drafting pen?? Tontu pops out of the floorboard and hands it to her. He follows up with a mug of hot chocolate for her as well. "Oh! Thank you, Tontu," she says and sets to work.

Out in the park, Hilda, David and Frida check out the plants, and they fill their notebooks pretty quickly. Now what? How about going to their secret place at the wall?

As they approach the pile of rocks near their secret part of the wall, it's a peaceful, quiet scene. The area is deserted, except for a few bunnies that nibble grass next to the wall. David says to Frida, "Maybe Hilda will hear the voices too!" Voices? What voices? David and Frida confess to Hilda that they have sometimes heard voices coming from inside the wall. Hilda is intrigued. What did the voices sound like? Whispery and mysterious? Nope. Growly and threatening? Nope. More like... chatty. You know, just little snippets such as "Please, pass the jam" or "It's a bit nippy, isn't it?" And one time, David thought he heard, "Do you think he knows there's a bug on his head?", but that was probably just his imagination.

They listen for a second, but all is quiet and calm... yet another bunny hops up to join the others... but then Hilda sees something moving in a crack in the wall. She thinks it might be ants, but she takes a closer look, and it's... elves! There's a group of elves in the wall! One elf stands on the ground near the newly arrived bunny. He's passing berries and seeds up to a line of elves who pass the items along, loading them into a spot in the wall. Hilda brings her face closer to the elves. "Hello!" she says. The elves wince, but they keep on with their work. One of them, however, makes an angry face at Hilda and shakes the pointy end of his arm at her! "I can see you, you know," Hilda says.

WHAT??? The elves look stricken! One of them yells, "HIDE!!!" They all scramble into hiding places within the wall, dropping berries and seeds in their panic to disappear from sight.

David and Frida are confused. They can't see anything except some berries and seeds dropping to the ground. Hilda explains that the voices they heard must have belonged to these elves. Elves are quite sniffy about who can see them and who can't. Nobody gets to see them without filling out the proper paperwork, which she has already done. Wow! David and Frida would love to meet some elves, and even if they can't see them, they'd love to talk to them!

Hilda tries to convince the elves to come back out - she's a friend to elves, really! It's official, per the king!

But the elves won't show themselves or even make a peep. The sun is setting and it's time to go. Hilda is annoyed. She's got to tell Alfur about this.

Later that night in Hilda's room, Alfur is surprised to hear that there are elves living in the Trolberg wall. He is certain that all of the official records say that there are no elven settlements whatsoever in Trolberg. Is she sure they weren't tourists? Nope. Hilda asks Tontu if he's ever heard of elves living in Trolberg. He answers that he has heard a nisse or two talk about some elves who live on the edge of town, literally. From what he's heard, they're a jumpy lot, very secretive. Tontu's never encountered them himself, and the other nisses were probably lying about it anyway.

Hilda says that the elves she met weren't just sniffy about being seen, they were downright afraid of being found out. Hilda heard them yell "HIDE!" loud and clear.

"Elves living in the Trolberg wall..." Alfur muses, "it just doesn't seem possible...

unless... unless...you've discovered the lost clan of the Northern Counties!"

At this point, Hilda's mum sticks her head in the door. She looks tired. "Goodnight, Hilda. I'll be up doing work, but you get some sleep."

"You look like you could use some sleep," Tontu says to Hilda's mum.

"No kidding," sighs Hilda's mum. Hilda tells her mum goodnight and her weary mum leaves.

"Okay, so what is the Lost Clan of the Northern Counties?" asks Hilda, as soon as her mum is gone.

Being a writer, Alfur is also an avid reader, so naturally he has read ALL the elven legends and historical tales. The story of the Lost Clan is a thrilling true tale of unrequited paperwork and protocol betrayal! Alfur pulls out his Pocket Edition of Elven Historical Tales and reads as we push in on the tiny but thick book:

"In olden times, there was a clan of elves who wished to buy a plot of land from another clan of elves. The paperwork required was a bill of sale. Now, the sellers maintained that ONE signature per clan was enough, but the buyers insisted that it required TWO. So they went to the magistrate to settle the dispute, and the magistrate informed them that it actually required THREE signatures per clan or else the land was not properly transacted and an improper transaction was simply not..."

At this point, Alfur is interrupted by a loud SNORE from Tontu. Hilda elbows him awake. "I'm going to bed," he mutters, and disappears behind Hilda's workstation. "Go on," says Hilda, "and get to the thrilling part."

Alfur jumps right back in: "Oh, you won't believe what happens next! The elf clan selling the land refused to abide by the magistrate's decision. They ranted and raved, saying all manner of roguish things such as "Why is one signature not enough? It is burdensome to sign something three times! And who makes up these rules anyway?"

Hilda sides with the roguish elves. "Why should you sign something three times when one time should be good enough? It's ridiculous. And who does make up a crazy rule like that?" says Hilda.

Alfur continues: "The king, as it turns out. Refusing to follow the king's rules meant banishment."

"So those perfectly reasonable elves were banished?" says Hilda.

“Worse!” says Alfur. “They ran away in the middle of the night before the official banishment ceremony, leaving tragedy in their wake!”

Hilda is skeptical. “Tragedy? They were going one way or another. What did it matter if they ran away?”

“To be banished is one thing. To run away before the official banishment ceremony is completed is quite another. To my people, it’s not only what you do, but how you do it that matters. Otherwise, things get complicated. You see, skipping out on the banishment ceremony meant that they couldn’t be properly banished, but the order of business dictated that only after a proper banishment could ownership of their land be transferred to the state, at which point the state could then sell it to the clan who had wished to buy it in the first place, assuming that all necessary paperwork was resubmitted within ten days,” says Alfur as he draws up a flow chart for Hilda.

“Oh, that’s not at all complicated,” Hilda deadpans.

Alfur continues: “And there was one additional consequence: the honour of the elf clan who had attempted to buy the land was besmirched due to their association with unresolved paperwork.”

“Well, that’s not fair,” says Hilda.

“Perhaps not, but they were given a way to reclaim it,” says Alfur.

“Probably by filling out a mountain of paperwork,” says Hilda.

“No,” says Alfur, “They could reclaim their honour only by defeating an elf from the rogue clan in a joust.” Alfur returns to the book: “And so, a brave elf of the dishonored clan saddled up his trusty beast...”

Hilda interrupts again, referring to the illustration in the book, which clearly shows an elf riding on a bunny rabbit. “He rides a bunny?”

“Rabbits are the traditional beast of battle, ridden to this day by the elven cavalry. It takes quite a bit of training just to stay on one,” answers Alfur. “Anyway, this brave elf rode forth on his faithful...”

“Rabbit,” says Hilda.

“Yes, on his rabbit,” continues Alfur, and then returns to the book, “He searched for years for the Lost Clan of the Northern Counties, hoping to restore his own clan’s honor. Alas, he could find them nowhere and returned a broken elf. The curse of the unresolved paperwork was passed down from generation to generation, and no one was ever able to fulfill the challenge of the joust and restore the family honor or claim the land. Even to this day, the plot of land has a fence around it with a sign that says “No Elf’s Land”. Elves shudder when they walk past it, although occasionally a young elf will try to impress his friends by reaching under the fence to pluck a blade of grass as a souvenir,” says Alfur, and a pressed blade of grass falls out of his book...

Alfur thinks it would do both sides a world of good to bring about a new friendship with the Lost Clan of the Northern Counties, if indeed Hilda has found them. Hilda agrees to take him to the wall the next day.

Early the next morning, Hilda’s mum is slumped over her desk, where she apparently fell asleep working into the wee hours of the morning. Hilda, Alfur and Twig are ready to head to the wall. Hilda breezes toward the door, calling out, “Bye, Mum! I’m going out now!” Hilda’s mum

raises her head, groggy. “Have fun. Be back for tea,” she says, still half-asleep, and Hilda is out the door!

At the wall, Alfur and Hilda arrive just as a group of elves are putting their rabbits through their paces (think equestrian practice, but with rabbits). When they see Hilda and Twig approach, however, they charge at them on their bunnies! It’s a tense moment and now Hilda has to admit that Alfur was right: elves on rabbits are intimidating and fierce. Twig’s snarl keeps them at bay, but they hold their positions by surrounding Hilda, Twig and Alfur in a circle.

Alfur bravely hops out of Hilda’s ear, introduces himself and tells the mounted elves that he and his friends come in peace. Hilda calls Twig off to prove that they have friendly intentions. Alfur explains that he himself is from the Northern Counties and he wonders if they could possibly be the descendants of the Lost Clan? The Elf Leader confirms Alfur’s suspicions. He explains that they’ve lived in the wall for generations now, but they always knew that they were being hunted and that the day would come when they would be challenged to fight. That’s why they’re always training and at the ready!

Alfur insists that he’s more interested in making friends. But the Elf Leader insists on checking Alfur’s credentials to see if friendship is an option, which means consulting an extremely tangled and complex genealogy chart to find out if Alfur is a descendent of their rival clan. “Who was your father?” asks the Chief Genealogist. “He was also Alfur, as was my grandfather, but before them there was a string of Alfrics... and then a string of Aldrics,” answers Alfur. “Aldrics, you say? Oh, no...”

To Alfur and Hilda’s dismay, Alfur is a fifth cousin twice removed of an Aldric who was the second cousin once removed of the elven clan whose honour was besmirched! As the remaining descendent of the wronged clan, he is duty bound by the original agreement to restore his clan’s honour by challenging a member of the other clan to a joust! The Elf Leader informs Alfur that they will not make this easy for him! He will have to joust with the entire cavalry, one by one! Hilda interjects that this doesn’t seem fair – why have all those jousts, when only one joust will do? But the Elf Leader is resolute when it comes to the subject of jousts.

Alfur is a writer, not a fighter and he would prefer no joust at all. Plus, he never even learned to ride a wild rabbit – lady bugs and beetles are more his speed. However, he is also an elf with a deep respect for the ways of his people and their traditions, so if he has to fight, he’ll fight. Duty is destiny and Alfur is an elf who shirks neither.

Before his rendezvous with destiny, however, there’s one last thing he must do: read the fine print. He asks for time to review the original agreement regarding the honour-avenging joust just to make sure that there isn’t some alternative put forth in the fine print. The Elf Leader agrees to give him a day to review the agreement, but only a day!

Back in Hilda’s room, Alfur and Hilda, with a magnifying glass, comb through the addendum in his historical tales book and find the original agreement pertaining to the joust. As it turns out, there is an alternative put forth in the fine print: if the elf of the wronged clan is able to collect a signature from a lindworm, a dangerous and generally paperwork-averse creature, then the matter shall be considered resolved, the land officially sold to the original buyers, and the offending sellers shall be absolved of wrongdoing. Furthermore, seeing as how lindworms are not accustomed to signing anything in the traditional way, the following marks on the paper will suffice as a signature: fang punctures or bite marks, also claw marks, singe marks or burn holes, or puckers on the paper made by drops of drool or venom.

Hilda can see why no elf would want to undertake this alternative because it’s much more involved and dangerous than just knocking your opponent off a rabbit in a joust! But Alfur

would rather make the extra effort required to achieve lasting peace between the parties than simply knock the opposition off of a rabbit. Besides, there's really no end to the jousting scenario - technically, there's nothing to prevent the other side from seeking revenge and so the tit for tat business can go on forever without solving anything! If Alfur succeeds in this quest, then both sides are free to go in peace.

"So where do we look for a lindworm?" asks Hilda. The library seems like a good place to start - not that there's a lindworm in the library, but there might be a book that gives a hint about where to find one in Trolberg. They race off to the library. (Hilda's mum is hard at work, but happy to hear that Hilda is going to the library!)

In the library, Hilda (with Alfur in her ear) approaches the librarian, who is up a ladder, checking on some books on very high shelf. "Excuse me," says Hilda, "I'm looking for..." But the Librarian interrupts with "I think this one should be helpful... and you should probably take a look at this one too." She hands Hilda two very old and dusty books, both of them guides to the local lindworms, Serpents and Dragons of Trolberg. Hilda is a little surprised - how did the librarian know what she was looking for? "Um, thanks, but how did you..." asks Hilda, but the librarian has moved on to help someone else! (Note: this librarian will turn out to have a connection with The Witch's Tower; see Trolberg map!)

Hilda and Alfur look through the books, with Hilda making notes about how lindworms always live underground and drawing up a map of possible locations of a lindworm lair in Trolberg. It seems that many of the entrances to lindworm lairs were sealed off in the course of building the city, but they find one potential entrance to a lair near the oldest part of the Trolberg wall, on the Trolberg side! They rush off to search for the entrance, which will simply look like a hole in the ground.

Using Hilda's hand-drawn map, Hilda, Twig and Alfur find the area near the wall and after a bit of looking and thanks to Twig's nose for finding a hole in the ground, they find what looks as if it could be the entrance to a lindworm lair. They take a deep breath before climbing in - who knows what awaits them, or, as Alfur says, if they'll even find a lindworm or if the lindworm will agree to sign his document... or, as Hilda says, if they'll even come out alive! They climb in, or rather down.

The hole leads to a long tunnel. As they follow the tunnel, Hilda is pretty sure that they have gone under the wall and are now underground on the wilderness side...

At last, they come to a large, cavernous space, occupied by an ancient lindworm. As it turns out, the lindworm is a botanist. Instead of hoarding gold like other dragons, she hoards seeds, roots in jars and pressed plant specimens. As she puts it, "I'm not interested in the gaudy goo-gaws that the younger, flashier dragon crowd goes in for. I prefer the real treasures of the earth."

Alfur explains his request, and lo and behold, she agrees to sign the paperwork, but first... she'll need payment.

Hilda offers up some things from her satchel: a leaf shaped like a heart, a pinecone that looks like it has eyes and, Hilda's favourite, a rock with some moss still on it. While the lindworm appreciates Hilda's sensibility when it comes to treasure, none of these offerings are good enough. She'll sign if they can bring her a specimen of troll thistle. Hilda and Alfur have never heard of troll thistle.

"It's a spiky little plant with a spiky little flower that sometimes sprouts from a troll rock. Now, at the moment, there is such a troll rock sitting between here and the nearest mountain. At this time of year and for a very brief time too, it sprouts a solitary troll thistle. Bring me that thistle and you've got a deal," says the lindworm.

"Consider it done!" says Alfur.

"Excellent," says the lindworm. "Troll thistle is very rare. Most troll rocks don't sprout one and when they do the flower doesn't last long, so it's a tough specimen to get," says the Lindworm.

"I'll bet," says Hilda.

But a deal's a deal, so Alfur, Hilda and Twig set out immediately. They must get to the Troll Rock and collect the troll thistle before the sun goes down, and the Troll Rock turns back into a living, breathing, hungry Troll!

When they reach the Troll Rock, the sun is just beginning to set. The solitary Troll Thistle is sticking up between the cracks on the top of the rock. They've got to work fast. Hilda pulls a small bell on a string out of her satchel. She always keeps it handy for troll emergencies. Twig deploys the bell, hanging on the Troll Rock's "nose"; that way they'll know as soon as he twitches!

While Twig deploys the bell, Hilda, with Alfur in her ear, climbs up to pluck the flower. They pluck it just as the sun goes down. The troll wakes, the bell jingles... Hilda, Alfur and Twig slide and then jump off the troll just as he stands up and yawns a fearsome - but jingly - yawn.

Hilda, Alfur and Twig run toward the lair, but... jingle, jingle, the troll is in pursuit. Hilda trips, drops her satchel, her notebook spills out, but there's no time to pick it up - she has to keep running! The troll, however, is closing the gap... Hilda tells Alfur to hop onto Twig who will take him back to the lindworm with the troll thistle specimen. Hilda will keep the troll from following them. Alfur is worried about Hilda, but Hilda insists and there's no time to argue the point - just promise her that if she dies, Alfur will write an amazing story about it because there's no point in dying like this if no one knows how it happened! Alfur promises. He and Twig race off toward the lair.

Hilda turns to face the troll, and, as she puts it, "answer to cruel inevitability." He runs right up to her. She closes her eyes, expecting the worst, but instead the Troll just stands in front of her, batting at his jingling nose with his short, stubby arms. It's actually kind of... heart-breaking. Hilda can't help but feel bad for the poor thing. He'll never be able to reach that bell and take it off and it's clearly causing him a lot of distress. "I'll take it off, but please don't eat me," says Hilda. She gets nothing but panicked jingles in response from the troll, but Hilda jumps up on him anyway and climbs out onto his nose! She inches out onto his nose and pushes the bell to the end of it, and just as she does so, he tips his head forward and down slightly. Hilda and the bell slide right off! AAAAAH!

OOF! She lands safely on the ground and starts to run into the forest away from the troll, but he grabs her! He lifts her up toward his mouth... she's staring into his open, drooly, toothy mouth when - SPLOOSH! He sticks out his tongue. Hilda's satchel is on the tip of his tongue! "Hey! My satchel! You picked it up for me!" And then there's a little gagging sound and he brings forth her notebook as well. Her satchel and notebook are gooey with troll drool, but at least she's got them back!

The troll drops her on the ground. "I knew trolls were nice! I just knew it! I thought it all along! My name is Hilda. What's yours?"

But the troll turns away from Hilda and walks away from her, completely disinterested. "Oh," says Hilda, "Goodbye then..."

It's time to catch up with Alfur, Twig and the lindworm anyway. Hilda runs straight to the lindworm's lair.

Down in the lair, Alfur and Twig are thrilled to see Hilda in one piece. He really didn't want to have to write the story of Hilda being eaten by a Troll! So, they've delivered the troll thistle... but now the lindworm balks at signing the paperwork. After all, they seem pretty good at specimen gathering. She knows that Alfur is desperate and maybe her initial price was too low. She decides she won't sign until they bring her a few more rare specimens.

Alfur is flustered; he probably should have first drawn up an agreement that said that one specimen would be enough, but he acted rashly and without regard to paperwork, and now see what's happened! Where will it ever end??

But Hilda isn't having it! "We have risked everything to get you that thistle, and the least you can do is sign - or sing - this paper so that Alfur can bring about some peace in his corner of the world! And if you don't stick to your part of the bargain, then you're no better than those greedy, gold-loving dragons!"

"Woo-ee, you're fiery," says the lindworm, "I respect that. Fine, I'll sign." The lindworm signs the paper with a gentle singe mark.

It's been a long day, but it's not over yet. Alfur, Hilda and Twig return to the elves in the wall, with all the paperwork necessary to release the Lost Clan of the Northern Counties from all future obligations to defend themselves, while at the same time restoring honour to the rival clan. In addition, No Elf's Land will now belong to Alfur and his family. The Elf Leader of the Lost Clan is grateful to Alfur and admits that it has been a burden to live for generations like fugitives in the wall, always fearful and yet always ready for a fight. Perhaps now they'll be free to put some energy into other things, like building a proper settlement with proper buildings and houses right here in Trolberg.

It's way past dinner when Hilda, Alfur and Twig return to Hilda's flat. Alfur is exhausted and heads right up to bed. Hilda is worried that her mum is going to be mad, but she's in luck! Her mum has been working so hard that she hasn't noticed the time. She's just happy that she's made her work deadlines! How about some tea to celebrate? She asks Hilda how it's going with her Friend to Plants badge. Unfortunately, the pages with the specimen drawings that Hilda collected with David and Frida were ruined by troll drool, although she doesn't tell her mum that. She finds a fresh page in her notebook, however, and quickly draws the troll thistle to show her mum. "Well, I did manage to find a rare specimen of troll thistle, so I might get extra points for that..."





CREATIVE TEAM

LUKE PEARSON

Luke Pearson is a leading international cartoonist, illustrator and writer. His largest body of work, the Hildafolk series, has received global critical acclaim and is currently being translated into 9 languages. Luke has been nominated for several Eisner awards (San Diego Comic Con 2013 & 2014), and is the winner of the Young People's Comic category at British Comic Awards (2012). Luke is also a storyboard artist for the hit US cartoon series Adventure Time, is frequently commissioned by The New York Times and the Guardian, has worked on cover designs for Penguin and created the artwork for 'The End' (Channel 4). He lives in Nottingham, UK.

STEPHANIE SIMPSON

Stephanie Simpson is the Head Writer/Executive Producer for the hit preschool action adventure series The Octonauts (currently airing on CBeebies in the UK and on Disney, Jr in the USA). She began her career in children's television as the producer and head writer for the Peabody award-winning PBS series Wishbone. She has received an Emmy award for her work as Head Writer on Arthur and has also collected several Emmy nominations for Postcards from Buster and The Wubbulous World of Dr. Seuss. She has adapted the work of Dr. Seuss, Judy Blume and James Howe for television and developed properties for various companies including Jim Henson Television and Sesame Workshop.

MERCURY FILMWORKS

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